

Language Learning Strategies in Teaching Speaking: A Case Study at SMK Negeri Nibaaf

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the language learning strategies, defined as the intentional techniques used by teachers to facilitate students' language development, employed by English teachers in teaching speaking at SMK Negeri Nibaaf. The purpose of the research was to identify the strategies that the teachers used and the challenges that they faced. A descriptive qualitative method was employed, and two English teachers participated in the study. Data were collected through classroom observations and interviews. The non-participant classroom observation was employed in three meetings. To support the observation, the semi-structured interview was addressed to two English Teachers. The data was analyzed in three stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Data reduction involved selecting and focusing on relevant information, data display was conducted through descriptive narrative, and the final stage involved drawing conclusions to answer the research questions. The findings revealed that the teachers implemented several strategies, including showing and telling, setting clear lesson goals, providing flexible time, encouraging collaborative work, and giving feedback. These strategies were effective in enhancing students' speaking performance, as most students became more confident and willing to speak English. However, some challenges persisted, such as limited vocabulary, shyness, and pronunciation difficulties. The study concluded that effective strategies significantly improved students' speaking skills, but teachers needed to continuously adapt their approaches to address learning problems.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Language is a fundamental means of communication that allows people to interact, share ideas, and express emotions. Without language, individuals would not be able to communicate effectively in either spoken or written form. English, as an international language, is widely used in education, science, business, politics, tourism, and many other fields (Edge, 1999). For Indonesian learners, mastering English is essential for facing the challenges of globalization and improving the quality of life. Although English is not the mother tongue in Indonesia, it is taught as a foreign

language at all levels of education, from elementary schools to universities, as well as in informal institutions such as language courses.

The teaching of English in Indonesia has changed significantly in recent years, particularly following the implementation of Kurikulum 2013, which places emphasis on communicative skills. The curriculum expects students to engage in meaningful interactions in English rather than focusing solely on grammatical mastery (Kemendikbud, 2017). This orientation resonates with the principles of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), which prioritize real communication, negotiation of meaning, and learner-oriented activities (Richards, 2006).

Speaking holds a central position in CLT, requiring teachers to design classroom practices that provide learners with abundant opportunities to communicate in authentic situations. Among the four basic language skills, speaking is often viewed as the most challenging. Richards (2008) described speaking as a core element of communication, while Hornby (1985) defined it as the ability to express ideas orally. Nunan (2003) emphasized that speaking is more difficult than reading, writing, or listening because it occurs in real time and cannot be revised. Brown (2003) similarly argued that speaking is complex as it integrates vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, fluency, and accuracy simultaneously.

The success of teaching speaking therefore depends largely on the strategies employed by teachers. Teachers not only transmit knowledge but also structure learning activities that promote participation and interaction. Orazbayeva (2016) underscored the teacher's role in creating a supportive classroom environment, while Brown (2001) defined strategies as specific classroom activities aligned with broader teaching approaches.

However, research indicates that many EFL teachers in developing contexts continue to rely on teacher-centered practices that limit students' opportunities for interactive speaking (Littlewood, 2007). This gap highlights the need to examine how instructional strategies are enacted in real classrooms, particularly in Indonesian EFL settings.

Vocational school students possess learning profiles that differ from those in general academic programs. They prioritize practical and technical competencies, have limited exposure to English media, and often report lower intrinsic motivation and confidence in speaking (Suryati, 2021). They also face persistent challenges related to vocabulary, pronunciation, and fluency, largely due to limited opportunities for authentic interaction and restricted access to learning materials (Widodo, 2016; Arsyad & Sulfasyah, 2020). These conditions require instructional strategies that are adaptable, contextual, and responsive to learner needs. Yet, research that examines language learning strategies specifically within rural vocational schools remains scarce.

In addition to these contextual challenges, learner autonomy has become an increasingly important component of communicative pedagogy. Although the national curriculum promotes student-centered learning, rural schools often maintain teacher-led routines that constrain opportunities for learners to plan, monitor, and reflect on their communication. As Richards and Lockhart (2007) note, autonomy develops when students are supported

in managing their own learning processes. However, in vocational settings, autonomy-building opportunities are frequently limited by heterogeneous proficiency levels, compressed instructional time, and students' perceptions of English as peripheral to their technical skills. These conditions reinforce the importance of investigating how teachers operationalize language-learning strategies to align curricular expectations with classroom realities.

Against this backdrop, the present study examines how English teachers in vocational schools select and implement language learning strategies to support the development of students' speaking skills. Understanding these strategies provides insight into teaching practices that enhance engagement, reduce anxiety, and improve oral performance. Based on these considerations, this study investigated the language learning strategies used by English teachers at SMK Negeri Nibaaf, with two specific aims: (1) to identify the strategies applied in teaching speaking, and (2) to examine the challenges encountered during the teaching process.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Speaking as Language Skill

Speaking is one of the four essential language skills, alongside listening, reading, and writing. It plays a central role in communication as it enables learners to express ideas, share information, and interact meaningfully with others. Richards (2008) highlighted speaking as a key component of communication, while Hornby (1985) defined it as the ability to use words in ordinary speech to convey thoughts and feelings. Unlike reading and writing, speaking occurs in real time and cannot be revised, which makes it more challenging (Nunan, 2003). Brown (2003) similarly noted that speaking is complex because it integrates vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, fluency, and accuracy simultaneously.

2.2. Teaching Speaking

Teaching speaking requires more than knowledge of linguistic structures; it involves creating opportunities for meaningful interaction. Brown (2010) described teaching as guiding and facilitating learning by establishing the appropriate conditions. Hughes (2003) emphasized that the goal of teaching spoken language is to develop learners' ability to interact successfully, encompassing both comprehension and production. Teachers therefore need to provide authentic practice, encourage both fluency and accuracy, and design communicative tasks that mirror real-life contexts (Brown, 2004; Santrock, 2011).

2.3. Language Learning Strategies

Language learning strategies (LLS) are deliberate thoughts, behaviors, and actions that learners use to enhance their understanding, storage, retrieval, and use of a language. According to Oxford (1990), these strategies consist of "specific actions" that make learning more effective, more enjoyable, and more self-directed. O'Malley and Chamot (1990) define LLS as conscious or semi-conscious activities that support language processing across listening, speaking, reading, and writing. In the context of speaking,

appropriate strategies can help learners reduce anxiety, build confidence, and improve oral task performance.

Many attempts have been made to classify LLS. Oxford (1990) distinguishes between direct strategies (memory, cognitive, and compensatory) and indirect strategies (metacognitive, affective, and social). Direct strategies support language use through practices such as pronunciation drills, repetition, summarizing spoken input, and inferring meaning from context. Indirect strategies assist learners in planning, monitoring their progress, managing affective factors, and interacting socially. O'Malley and Chamot (1990) similarly categorize LLS into cognitive, metacognitive, and socioaffective strategies, each facilitating different dimensions of language learning.

Language learning strategies are particularly important in speaking classes, where learners must respond in real time. Brown (2001) emphasizes self-monitoring, self-correction, and communication strategies such as paraphrasing and negotiation of meaning. Thornbury (2015) proposes three strategic stages in developing speaking: awareness-raising (e.g., noticing linguistic gaps), appropriation (e.g., drilling, dialogue work, role-play), and autonomy-building (e.g., discussions, presentations). These strategies enable learners to internalize language patterns and gradually achieve fluency. In EFL contexts such as Indonesia, where exposure to English outside the classroom is limited, strategy use becomes essential for supporting oral fluency, confidence, and willingness to communicate.

Teachers, therefore, need to understand not only the categories of LLS but also their pedagogical implications. Teaching strategies such as pre-task planning, cooperative learning, and structured repetition can help shape learners' strategic competence and independence—both of which are particularly important in vocational schools, where learners experience challenges such as restricted vocabulary and low confidence.

However, several studies also indicate that learners' ability to deploy strategies varies according to motivation, prior experience, and learning environment. Oxford (1990) notes that explicit modeling and guided practice help students understand how strategy use relates to communicative outcomes. O'Malley and Chamot (1990) similarly argue that explicit strategy instruction enhances learners' metacognitive control, enabling them to plan, monitor, and evaluate their spoken output. These insights underscore the relevance of examining how teachers incorporate strategy awareness into the teaching of speaking in low-exposure EFL settings such as rural vocational schools.

2.4. Teaching Strategies in Speaking Classrooms

Strategies are systematic plans or actions that teachers use to achieve specific learning goals. Brown (2010) defined strategies as particular methods of approaching a task or managing information. In language teaching, strategies help teachers deliver content effectively and create an engaging learning environment (Hamruni, 2017).

Teaching strategies in speaking classrooms refer to methods that support learners in improving their oral skills. Brown (2001) emphasizes that strategies are planned instructional actions that guide learners toward

communicative competence. Teachers must not only ensure linguistic accuracy but also cultivate environments in which learners feel comfortable taking risks and interacting with peers (Hughes, 2003).

Masitoh (2017) identifies several common strategies, including expository, cooperative, inquiry-based, problem-based, and active learning approaches. Thornbury (2015) similarly classifies speaking strategies into awareness-raising, appropriation, and autonomy-based activities. Repetition and practice are foundational for developing fluency, while questioning strategies help scaffold learner responses (Richards & Lockhart, 2007). Collaborative work and feedback—both corrective and supportive—play significant roles in reducing anxiety and improving accuracy (Johnson & Johnson, 2009; Lightbown & Spada, 2013). Together, these approaches enable learners to develop the linguistic and pragmatic skills necessary for effective communication.

2.5. Types of Speaking Activities

Brown (2004) categorizes oral production into five types—imitative, intensive, responsive, transactional, and interpersonal—each serving a different communicative purpose.

2.5.1. Imitative Speaking

Imitative speaking involves repeating language forms with a focus on phonological accuracy. Drilling and controlled repetition help learners internalize pronunciation patterns (Brown, 2004).

2.5.2. Intensive Speaking

Intensive speaking consists of short, controlled responses that target specific linguistic features such as grammar or vocabulary. Activities include reading aloud, sentence completion, and structured Q&A (Richards & Renandya, 2002).

2.5.3. Responsive Speaking

Responsive speaking includes brief exchanges such as greetings, requests, and simple conversational turns. These activities promote automaticity and prepare learners for more extended communication (Harmer, 2007).

2.5.4. Transactional Speaking

Transactional communication focuses on conveying and obtaining information. Activities such as interviews, information-gap tasks, and problem-solving discussions align well with vocational learning needs (Widodo, 2016).

2.5.5. Interpersonal Speaking

Interpersonal speaking aims to establish and maintain social relationships, requiring attention to pragmatic norms, turn-taking, and emotional expression (Thornbury, 2005). Activities such as role-plays and storytelling help students develop these socio-pragmatic skills.

2.6. English Teaching in Vocational School Contexts

Teaching English in vocational schools (SMK) presents unique challenges because students prioritize technical skills and often have limited exposure to English. The curriculum positions English as a tool for communication in workplace contexts (Kemendikbud, 2017), yet many students—particularly in rural areas—demonstrate low motivation and confidence (Suryati, 2021). Restricted access to materials further limits opportunities for authentic interaction (Widodo, 2016).

Vocational classrooms often contain large, mixed-ability groups, and many students struggle with vocabulary, pronunciation, and anxiety (Marhum, 2019). Effective teaching therefore requires strategies that address these challenges, such as collaborative learning, guided speaking practice, flexible time allocation, and feedback. In under-resourced settings, teachers frequently rely on improvisational solutions to compensate for the lack of materials (Arsyad & Sulfasyah, 2020).

2.7. Previous Studies

Research on teaching speaking has examined various contexts. Sujayani (2017) reported that extracurricular English teachers used games, discussions, and interviews to enhance comprehension. Rahmawati (2013) found that story-writing supported hearing-impaired learners' expression. Hendri (2016) identified recordings, dialogues, and informal conversations as effective strategies in Islamic junior high schools. Recent studies in vocational schools highlight role-playing, collaborative learning, and project-based approaches as effective for improving speaking performance (Putra & Sihombing, 2023; Sari & Pratama, 2025).

2.8. Relevance of the Study

The literature shows that teaching speaking requires strategies tailored to learners' needs and contexts. While numerous studies address junior high schools and inclusive education, research on speaking strategies in rural vocational schools remains limited. This study therefore examines the language learning strategies used by English teachers at SMK Negeri Nibaaf and the challenges they encounter in teaching speaking.

3. METHOD

This study employed a descriptive qualitative design. Creswell defines descriptive qualitative research as a way of exploring and describing a social or human problem from participants' perspectives. It seeks to provide a systematic account of an existing phenomenon by gathering and analyzing textual and observational data using techniques such as interviews and classroom observations. The findings are typically presented in a detailed narrative form, with themes emerging from recurring patterns in the data (Creswell, 2009). This design was selected because it allows the researcher to document instructional practices as they naturally occur, maintaining close alignment with the study's focus on classroom-based speaking pedagogy.

The participants were two experienced English teachers who taught tenth-grade students at SMK Negeri Nibaaf during the 2021/2022 academic

year. They were selected through purposive sampling, with the criterion that each teacher had more than two years of experience teaching English. The data were collected through non-participant classroom observations and face-to-face interviews. The observation sheet consisted of several sections, including lesson stages, teaching activities, teacher–student interaction patterns, and specific language learning strategies used during speaking instruction. Field notes were also taken to document spontaneous classroom events, affective responses, and nonverbal behaviors that were not fully captured in the structured observation sheet. This combination of structured and unstructured documentation enabled the researcher to analyze both planned instructional strategies and adaptive teacher behaviors that surfaced during classroom interaction.

The interview guides consisted of open-ended questions intended to obtain information about the teachers' strategy choices and the obstacles they experienced in teaching speaking. The interviews also served to clarify observational findings, allowing the researcher to cross-check initial interpretations and probe deeper into the pedagogical reasoning behind particular instructional decisions. The dual-phase procedure ensured that the data captured both observable teaching practices and teachers' reflective accounts of those practices.

The data analysis followed the framework described by Miles and Huberman (2014), which includes data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Data reduction entailed transcribing observations and interviews, selecting salient excerpts, grouping them into emerging categories, and organizing them according to the research focus. Data displays were presented in descriptive narrative matrices, allowing the researcher to identify recurring patterns across the two participants. Conclusion drawing involved interpreting these patterns to answer the research questions and verify emerging tendencies. To ensure reliability, the study used triangulation of data sources (observations and interviews), member checking, and extended field engagement to confirm the credibility of the findings.

In addition to these core analytical stages, the researcher conducted multiple iterative readings of the observational records to refine theme development and to ensure that the coding remained grounded in the data rather than in researcher assumptions. This recursive process strengthened the alignment between teachers' reported strategies and their enacted practices. Triangulation was particularly crucial in confirming congruence between teachers' stated instructional goals and the observable behaviors documented during lessons.

Finally, the trustworthiness of the study was enhanced by maintaining an audit trail of analytic decisions, including memos, coding adjustments, and reflections written during fieldwork. These records ensured transparency in the analytic process and provided a clear rationale for the categorization of language learning strategies. Taken together, these methodological procedures preserved the descriptive integrity of the study while offering a rigorous account of how speaking instruction unfolded in the vocational school context.

4. RESULTS

The findings of this study are based on classroom observations and interviews with two English teachers at SMK Negeri Nibaaf. Both teachers used multiple strategies in teaching speaking, although the scope and emphasis differed slightly between them.

Teacher A (Mr. Yeremias Bolaer)

Observation in class X ATPH showed that Teacher A followed the lesson plan structure, beginning with an opening, continuing with the main activity, and concluding with the closing stage. During the opening, he conducted orientation, apperception, motivation, and reference-giving. He began with greetings, checked attendance, reviewed the previous lesson, and explained learning objectives and competencies.

In the main activities, Teacher A implemented several strategies. He used showing and telling by presenting short dialogues and supporting pictures, guided students in practicing pronunciation and intonation, and checked understanding through questioning. He also encouraged pair work to stimulate peer learning and scaffold dialogue creation. The following strategies were observed:

- a) Showing and telling
- b) Flexible time
- c) Questioning for understanding
- d) Collaborative work
- e) Repeated practice

At the closing stage, he summarized the lesson and informed students about upcoming activities. Based on a simple classroom evaluation, 80 percent (12 of 15 students) appeared more confident in speaking English, indicating that his strategies supported students' oral engagement. Although this figure is descriptive rather than statistically derived, it provides an initial indication of how responsive students were to scaffolded speaking opportunities.

Teacher B (Mr. Bonevantura Olas Kofi)

Observation in class X TKSDH showed a similar three-part lesson sequence. Teacher B greeted students, checked attendance, reviewed previous content, and explained the learning objectives.

During the main activities, he modeled short dialogues, helped students identify the use of can and will, facilitated short interview tasks, and guided students to report their findings orally. After student presentations, he provided direct feedback to address pronunciation issues and strengthen accuracy. His strategies included:

- a) Setting clear lesson goals
- b) Showing and telling
- c) Flexible time
- d) Repeated practice
- e) Providing feedback

He concluded the lessons jointly with students and introduced the next topic. Observation indicated that 66 percent (10 of 15 students) showed increased confidence in speaking English. While this increase was more

moderate than in Teacher A's class, the pattern still suggested positive movement toward greater oral participation.

5. DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to identify the strategies used by English teachers in teaching speaking and examine the challenges they faced. The findings show that both teachers employed overlapping strategies—setting lesson goals, modeling language through showing and telling, allowing flexible time, incorporating repeated practice, offering feedback, using questioning techniques, and promoting collaborative work. These strategies supported students' confidence, participation, and willingness to speak.

Teacher A relied more heavily on questioning and collaborative work, whereas Teacher B emphasized learning objectives and corrective feedback. Both sets of practices contributed to meaningful interaction and improved speaking performance. These findings align with Ur (1996) and Brown (2001), who argue that multiple instructional strategies are essential for enhancing oral participation. What distinguishes the present study is the focus on a rural vocational context, where strategy use is shaped not only by pedagogical preferences but also by the practical constraints and expectations of vocational education.

While earlier research explored teaching strategies in junior high schools, extracurricular programs (Sujayani, 2017), inclusive classrooms (Rahmawati, 2013), and Islamic junior high schools (Hendri, 2016), few studies have concentrated on vocational schools in rural Indonesia. This study contributes to filling that gap by illustrating how teachers adapt strategies to students' needs in such contexts. The teachers not only used common strategies like drilling and dialogue practice but also adjusted timing, pacing, and feedback procedures to accommodate learners who required additional support.

Recurring challenges included limited vocabulary, shyness, fear of mistakes, and pronunciation problems. These align with Ur's (1996) claim that inhibition and fear commonly hinder speaking performance. However, this study adds nuance by demonstrating that these challenges are amplified in vocational settings where students frequently prioritize technical subjects over English and have limited exposure to authentic English-speaking environments. These contextual factors make speaking instruction more complex and require teachers to adopt flexible, empathetic, and context-sensitive strategies.

The study also shows that the effectiveness of instructional strategies cannot be separated from the broader vocational school context. At SMK Negeri Nibaaf, communicative activities are expected to support students' prospective careers, making strategy selection highly consequential. Approaches such as showing and telling, structured practice, flexible time allocation, and collaborative work allow learners to connect classroom English with the communicative demands of real-world vocational tasks. This supports Widodo's (2016) argument that strategy use in vocational settings must be aligned with functional language needs.

An additional implication concerns the degree of learner autonomy fostered in both classrooms. Although teachers provided meaningful scaffolding, the data indicate that most speaking activities were teacher-directed. This pattern suggests that autonomy-building strategies—such as sustained project work, student-led discussions, or self-assessment—have yet to be fully integrated into these classrooms. Given Richards and Lockhart's (2007) emphasis on metacognitive involvement, further work is needed to develop students' capacity to monitor and evaluate their own oral production.

Finally, the persistent issues faced by students underscore the need not only for effective teaching strategies but also for sustained learner training. The benefits of pre-task planning, explicit instruction in communication strategies, and guided repeated practice—highlighted by Griffiths (2013) and Cohen (2011)—are particularly relevant in rural EFL contexts. Integrating such elements more systematically may help students gradually assume greater responsibility for their own learning and build long-term strategic competence.

Methodological Reflection and Research Limitations

The methodological choices adopted in this study require explicit reflection to clarify the scope and boundaries of the findings. As a descriptive qualitative inquiry, the study prioritised depth of understanding over numerical generalisation. This orientation made it possible to capture the ways in which teachers conceptualised and enacted speaking strategies in their vocational classrooms, yet it also imposed certain limitations inherent to qualitative work. Because the research focused on two teachers within a single rural vocational school, the patterns observed should be interpreted as context-specific rather than universally representative of all Indonesian SMKs. The aim, therefore, is not to claim broad generalisability, but to provide an analytically rich account that may resonate with similar contexts and contribute to comparative discussions in the field.

Another methodological consideration concerns the role of the researcher during observations. Although a non-participant stance was maintained throughout data collection, the presence of an observer may still have influenced classroom dynamics in subtle ways. Teachers might have amplified certain practices or moderated their pace of instruction, while students could have adjusted their participation levels in response to being observed. Such reactivity is difficult to eliminate entirely in classroom-based studies and should be acknowledged as a natural constraint. The interview phase similarly presents limits: responses may reflect teachers' aspirations or professional ideals rather than fully mirroring their daily routines. Nonetheless, triangulating observation and interview data helped mitigate these tensions by allowing cross-checking between enacted and reported practices.

The study also faced constraints related to time and ecological complexity. Classroom observations were conducted over a limited period within a single semester, which allows for a snapshot of pedagogical routines but cannot capture long-term patterns, seasonal variations, or fluctuations tied to curricular cycles. Vocational schools, in particular, often

operate under shifting schedules due to practicum periods, industry placements, and extracurricular obligations, all of which influence teaching time and learner readiness. Future research with a longer observation window would provide a more comprehensive view of how speaking strategies evolve across an academic year.

Despite these limitations, the study offers valuable insights through the systematic documentation of strategy use, the integration of multiple data sources, and the emphasis on contextual interpretation. By articulating the methodological boundaries transparently, the research strengthens its credibility and positions itself as a foundation for subsequent investigations seeking to deepen the understanding of speaking instruction in diverse vocational settings.

Extended Pedagogical and Theoretical Implications

The findings of this study also generate broader pedagogical and theoretical implications that extend beyond the immediate classroom observations. From a pedagogical standpoint, the teachers' reliance on modelling, guided practice, and structured feedback underscores the need for professional learning opportunities that equip educators with adaptable strategy repertoires. Teachers in rural vocational schools frequently work in resource-constrained environments, which means that strategy effectiveness often depends less on advanced technological tools and more on skilled facilitation, purposeful scaffolding, and the ability to align tasks with learners' vocational identities. Professional development programs that emphasise low-resource strategy design, feedback literacy, and the integration of work-related communicative tasks would strengthen the instructional foundations observed in this study.

These implications intersect with theoretical perspectives on communicative competence and strategic competence. The teachers' practices suggest an implicit orientation toward balancing accuracy-focused tasks with fluency-building activities, echoing widely cited discussions within communicative language teaching. However, the limited opportunities for learner autonomy observed in the data indicate that certain dimensions of communicative competence—particularly strategic and metacognitive components—remain underdeveloped. Encouraging learners to plan their utterances, monitor their performance, and evaluate their communicative outcomes is consistent with established language learning strategy frameworks. Embedding these metacognitive routines into classroom instruction could help learners move from supported performance toward greater independence, an outcome that aligns with the long-term goal of preparing vocational students for varied workplace communication settings.

Furthermore, the findings highlight the relevance of aligning curriculum expectations with contextual realities. While national policy documents articulate ambitious communicative goals, the rural vocational context in this study illustrates how such expectations can only be met when teachers have the tools, time, and institutional support to adapt strategies meaningfully. This raises broader questions for policymakers regarding the coherence between national curriculum design, teacher

training opportunities, and the actual communicative demands encountered by vocational graduates. Addressing these systemic factors would ensure that classroom strategy use is not merely teacher-dependent but institutionally sustained.

In theoretical terms, the study contributes to discussions on how strategy instruction mediates between learners' linguistic resources and their communicative needs. The interplay between modelling, practice, feedback, and learner affect observed in this context supports the argument that strategy use is not a discrete instructional technique but a dynamic process shaped by classroom culture, learner identity, and perceived communicative relevance. Understanding this interplay more deeply could inform future research that explores how specific combinations of strategies interact with learner characteristics in vocational environments. Such work would enrich both strategy theory and the pedagogical literature on speaking instruction.

6. CONCLUSION

This study concluded that English teachers at SMK Negeri Nibaaf employed a range of strategies that supported the teaching of speaking. These strategies contributed to increased student motivation, a more supportive classroom climate, and noticeable improvements in oral performance. At the same time, persistent challenges—such as limited vocabulary, low confidence, and recurrent pronunciation problems—continued to influence learning outcomes. These findings demonstrate that while the strategies were beneficial, they required ongoing adaptation to meet the needs of vocational learners whose exposure to English remained limited.

More broadly, the study illustrates that effective speaking instruction in vocational settings depends not only on the selection of strategies but also on the extent to which those strategies align with the contextual realities of the school. The teachers' use of modeling, guided practice, flexible timing, and collaborative tasks reflects an instructional orientation that seeks to bridge curricular expectations with the actual communicative demands faced by vocational students. This alignment underscores the pedagogical significance of tailoring instruction to learners' backgrounds, professional orientations, and levels of linguistic readiness.

The results also highlight the interconnected nature of strategy use and learner engagement. Although both teachers created conditions that encouraged participation, the data suggest that gains in speaking proficiency are most sustainable when students receive repeated opportunities for structured practice and targeted feedback. These elements appear especially valuable in rural contexts where English exposure outside the classroom is minimal. As such, the study affirms the importance of integrating strategy-based instruction with practices that develop learners' confidence, strategic awareness, and control over their own learning processes.

Finally, the findings point to several implications for future instructional development. Teachers may benefit from incorporating more autonomy-building tasks, expanding opportunities for reflective learning,

and integrating strategy training that helps students manage communicative challenges independently. Continued professional dialogue, collaborative lesson study, and context-specific workshops could further support teachers in refining their approaches. Addressing these aspects would not only strengthen speaking instruction at SMK Negeri Nibaaf but also contribute to broader efforts to enhance English education in rural vocational environments.

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